

THE FRENCH ADMINISTRATION OF INDO-CHINA

In fact, the confusion was so great that Le Myre was recalled by the Minister of the Navy without even notifying the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

As a result of the secret negotiations between Hue and Peking, the confusion in Paris was more than matched by that in Tonkin. Chinese troops arrived in the delta, officially to drive out the bandits, but in reality to co-operate with them against the French. Riviere was finally roused to action, and began in March 1883 to conquer the delta, just as Gamier had done before him. Two months later he was killed in a sortie against the Chinese, on almost the identical spot where Gamier had met death some nine years before. But this time Paris was aroused. By a big majority in the Chamber, credits were voted for military action. The French bombardment of Hue's forts forced Tu-Duc to sue for peace. On August 25th a temporary treaty was signed in which the Chinese Emperor finally recognized a French Protectorate. Slowly the delta towns were taken in the spring of 1884, despite the frequent changes in the French command. Now only the Chinese remained to be dealt with.

While the delta was being conquered, French diplomacy was active in Peking. Due to acute jealousy, there was the most amazing lack of co-operation among the French officials there. Fournier, a personal friend of Ly Hung Chang's, without the knowledge of the French large d'affaires, the Comte de Semalle, was preparing an agreement which he thought would put an end to the hostilities (May 1884). Another entirely separate negotiation was being conducted by Patenotre

Hue. Further confusion was added by wire-pulling in Paris, which

d to the recall of certain of these diplomats for personal or political motives, and this lightly jeopardized the outcome of the war. Ferry's diplomacy had succeeded, however, in bringing hostilities to an official close when the famous Bac-Le incident occurred. In conformity with China's promise of evacuation, French troops were occupying the post ' Bac-Le when they were attacked by the Chinese, whom they thought had withdrawn. Opinion in France was so stirred by this time that the deputies were willing to carry the action into China. But war was never officially declared, for fear of antagonizing the other Powers, France was long afraid to shell Chinese ports lest this alienate England, upon whom the French fleet in the East depended for supplies. In August, however, Admiral Courbet did destroy the forts along the river, and in October attempt, with only partial success, to occupy Formosa, and later the Pescadores Islands. These measures

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